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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
MFA FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION

by

LYNDON JEFFERY KAM (KAHMAKOATAYO)

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IN

PAINTING

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1997



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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled:

Final Visual Presentation

submitted by LYNDON JEFFERY KAM (KAHMAKOATAYO) in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art.

The University of Alberta

RELEASE FORM

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FOR WHICH THESIS WAS GRANTED MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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I hereby release the following works for incorporation into the University Collections,
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TITLE	DATE	MEDIUM	SIZE
JOURNEY	1997	A/C	49" X 77"

Two Voices Echo

My paintings reflect the Indigenous Peoples' experience: interacting with the dominant culture, the ecological environment, and technology. This interaction exists in the forms of contrasts and syntheses, as an artist, I address the cultural past, present, and future of Native People, in the formal painthandling and the composition of my work.

My experience as a Native person living in Canada allows me to reflect on the polarity between the natural world and the high-tech one. The Parfleche paintings, in particular, aim to bridge the two cultural realities: formally, the stained nuances of an organic, natural colour field, and the thick geometric lines painted in artificial day-glo colours of technology exist together in this work. Similarly, although the stripes in some painting allude to traditional Native blankets, these designs are also an integral component of abstract painting typical of the New York School.

Colour is a major component in my work. However, the fusion of high-Modernist colour field, or stripe painting with historic Native art, such as parfleche designs, tee-pee decorations, robe and regalia paintings, or tribal textiles of the Southwest, gives my work specific personal context and meaning. Therefore, these painting's are not limited to formal issues alone, instead, their designs express an inherent significance, one rooted in traditional Native culture.

Since I began my art training, my work has evolved through various stages. The current work reflects my concern with combining formal practices with designs and patterns from my Native cultural heritage. In this way, my work resonates with echos of two cultural voices.

Jeff Kahmakoatayo-Kam

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I want to thank God.

Secondly, my mother for having me and my grandparents for raising me.

Linda and Alfred Youngman, thanks cuz, thank you bro!

The Battlefords Tribal Council for their tremendous support. Special thanks to Mr. Roy Albert for his enthusiastic support and kindness.

The Fine Arts Department at U of A. Thank you very much for accepting me into your graduate program.

The Alberta Art Foundation - thank you.

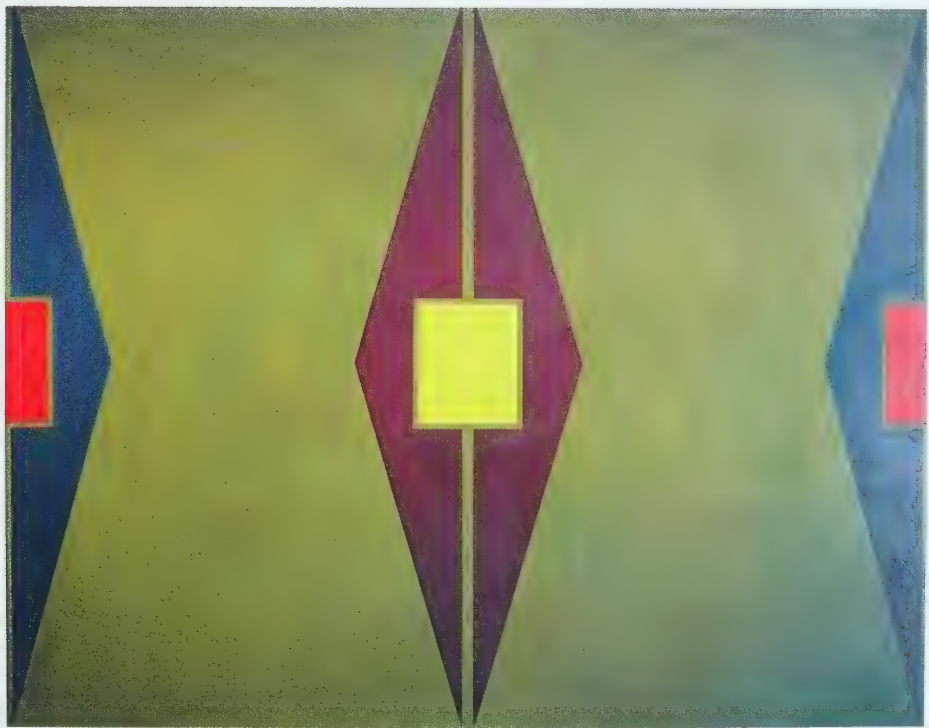
Graham Peacock as my supervisor, thanks for sharing your indepth knowledge about painting.

The Oral Examination Committee; Dr. Desmond Rochfort, Prof. Phil Darrah, Prof. Graham Peacock, Prof. Jetske Sybesma and Prof. Earl Waugh. Thank you all.

To the rest of the staff in the department, thanks for any assistance you've given me.

Also to the graduate students - I wish you all good luck and thanks for the continuous encouragement and insight you've shared.

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|-----|---|------|
| 11. | <u>THE CARRIER</u>
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
191cm X 209cm
75" X 82" | 1997 |
| 12. | <u>FIRST AND LAST</u>
ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO ON CANVAS
191cm X 219cm
75" X 86" | 1997 |
| 13. | <u>PARFLECHE/CELL CHARGE</u>
ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO ON CANVAS
191cm X 204cm
75" X 80" | 1997 |
| 14. | <u>COMMUNION</u>
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
183cm X 196cm
72" X 77" | 1997 |
| 15. | <u>TRANSITION</u>
ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO/GLITTER ON CANVAS
173cm X 203cm
68" X 80" | 1997 |
| 16. | <u>COAT OF MANY COLOURS</u>
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
159cm X 204cm
63" X 80" | 1997 |
| 17. | <u>CONFLUENCE</u>
ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO ON CANVAS
183cm X 196cm
72" X 77" | 1997 |
| 18. | <u>CAUGHT-UP</u>
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
3 Panels each 82cm X 191cm
or 32" X 75" | 1997 |
| 19. | <u>FORESEEN</u>
ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO ON CANVAS
104 cm X 104cm
41" X 41" | 1997 |
| 20. | <u>EQUALIZER</u>
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
120cm X 196cm
47" X 77" | 1997 |



"PARFLECHE/ARTIFICIAL COMPONENTS"

173 CM X 219 CM

ACRYLIC/DAY-GLO

Jeff Kahmakoatayo-Kam

Two Voices Echo

Jeff Kahmakootayo - Kam
MFA PAINTING

PUBLIC VIEWING DATES:
DECEMBER 9-21

OPENING RECEPTION:
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1997 7:00-10:00

THIS EXHIBITION IS THE FINAL VISUAL PRESENTATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN PAINTING

1-1 Fine Arts Building
University of Alberta
112 Street & 89 Avenue
Edmonton, Canada T6G 2C9
(403) 492-2081

Gallery Hours:
Tuesday to Friday: 10 am to 5 pm
Sunday: 2 pm to 5 pm
Closed on Monday, Saturday & Statutory Holidays



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Color of spirit

By Merte Martin

"You have to pay attention," one of them said. "We're going to show you something." (Lessons From The Wolverine, by Barry Lopez)

Stand quietly in front of one of his paintings; Jeff Kahnakoatayo-Kam is going to show you something.

On the evening of December 11, 1997, they came, young and old, grandparents and babies, from Lethbridge, Gwynne, Hobbema, The Little Pine Reservation, The Battlefords Tribal Council and from the U of A community to see the work of this 29-year-old Native Cree. Members of Kam's family sat on the bench against the windows opposite

his painting *Almighty Voice* at the Fine Arts Building Gallery and observed the observers of his final visual presentation for his master of fine arts degree.

Kam was intrigued by the reactions. He, too, noticed his family watching people and said, "I will have to ask my

grandmother about that." Kam's eyes sparkle when he speaks of her. "I was raised from the age of 10 months old by my maternal grandparents. My grandmother, who is now 93 years old, is very wise and taught me from a very young age to be responsible for my actions. I had a very happy childhood and was raised in a very loving home. I can't

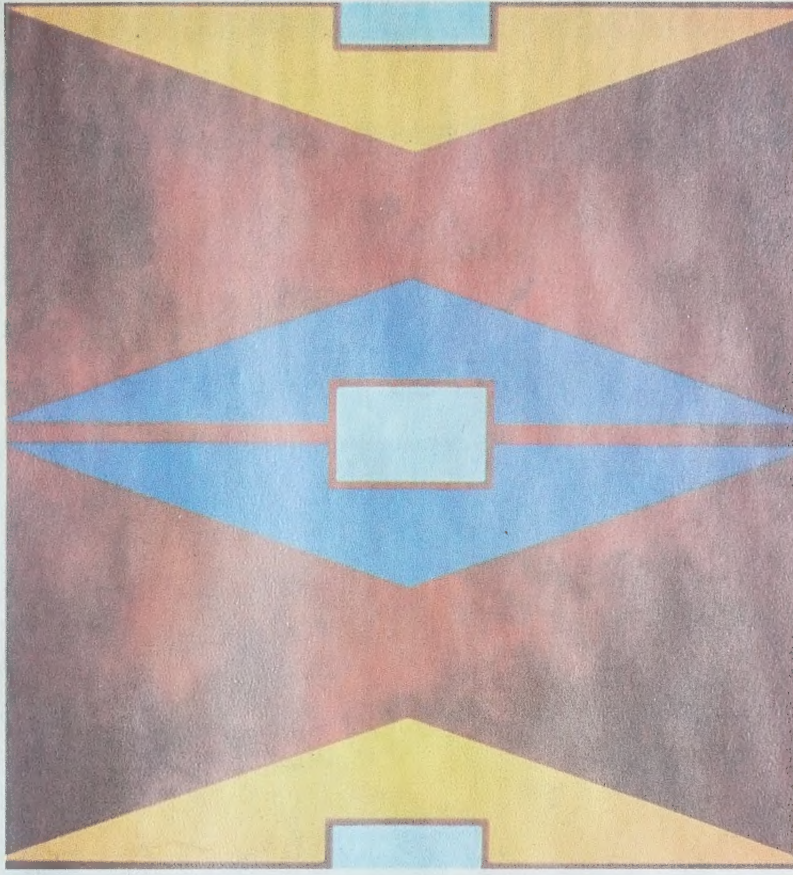
person said, "That's Sante Fe!" of his painting, *The Protector*. Others talked about the tingling sensation they experienced as they viewed his work. Someone else said, "I get this same feeling when I look at Emily Carr's paintings."

Kam calls this series of 20 paintings *Two Voices Echo*. Two voices do echo in Kam's work: his technique (staining the canvas first and then applying stripes of joyful bright colors), and his message, which entices us to ask questions. Regarding *Almighty Voice*, Kam says, "I've had that title for a long time and I've been saving it for just the right painting. I knew it had to be a strong paint-

ing. Almighty Voice, Kah-kee-say-mane-too-wayo (Voice of the Great Spirit) was arrested in the early winter month of October for illegally butchering a cow. In his escape from Frog Lake jail, he killed a policeman and for 19 months evaded recapture. Along with two young relatives, he was

finally cornered by a group of 100 NWMP and citizens, which the three held off for two days. In the end, two more police and one citizen were killed and the three young Indians died when the bluff of poplars in which they were hiding was bombed with cannon-fire. The year was 1897 and Almighty Voice was 23 years old.

As a child

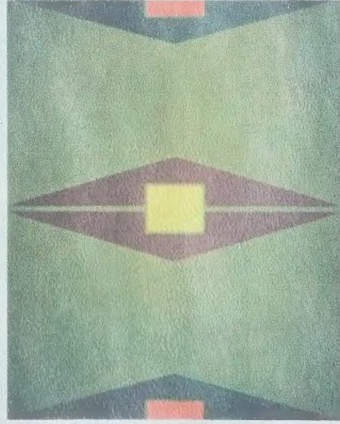


Parfleche/Cell Components,
188cm x 201cm

there with the landscape and the Pueblo people and have close friends who are Navajo and friends who are Hopi. There are many similarities between their ways and my Cree ways. The spirituality and ceremonies are similar and yet different." Kam finds encouragement and support in what Allan

Houser, a well-known Apache sculptor from

The parfleche paintings hint at hidden treasures, messages not yet revealed; they are a beginning, a doorway opened just a crack. And then there is that physical sensation experienced as we stand in front of Jeff Kahnakoatayo ("It means Carrier, Heavy Carrier")-Kam's paintings: that tingle along the spine, the hairs standing on our necks.



Parfleche/Artificial Components,
173cm x 219cm

first started making art. It seems I have always been drawing or working with color."

"I don't talk to my family about my art that much so they didn't know what to expect the evening of my exhibition," says Kam. "My sister saw people we knew in my paintings. She said, 'That one is so-and-so! She wears those colors.'" This reaction is surprising considering Kam's work is stained canvas with stripes or blocks of color. One



Jeff Kahmakaotamo-Kam in painting studio.

books on wildlife, Kam caught the attention of an artist and relative, Alfred Young Man. Once Kam was a teen, Young Man took him on a trip to New Mexico and to the campus of the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe where Jeff later completed a two-year course. "My time there went by very quickly," said Jeff. "I'm still attracted to Santa Fe and try to go there as much as I can. I feel comfortable

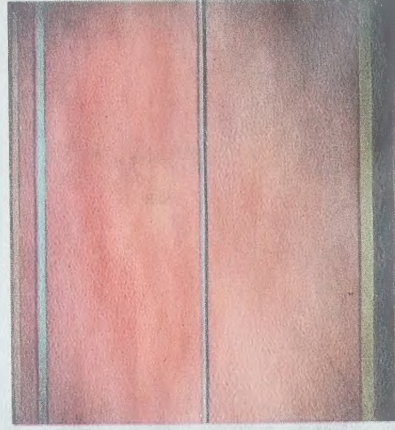
Kam won a scholarship when he applied to the Kansas City Art Institute. Another two years, more exhibitions and awards later, he had finished his formal art training but wasn't sure he would become an artist. He stayed out of school from January until August but, missing the interaction he had enjoyed in Kansas City, chose to enter a master's program at the U of A. "Here I was allowed to do a lot of exploration and not just focus on technique." He had seen the work of the New York School (Larry Poons, Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, and here at the U of A, Canadian artist Jack Bush).

"I had done a lot of realist paintings in Kansas City, a lot of photography, some airbrush paintings as well as some non-representational work. Then I asked myself 'What am I doing?' I was looking at stripes. I always liked color. I had an excuse to use that color—and the opportunity to figure myself out. I saw the 'stained' paintings in books and read a little about their techniques and how their work was direct."

Kam's Parfleche series unites the Native and the Christian, the now and the ancient, and the spiritual with the technical. (A parfleche is a leather hide used to wrap and carry belongings or supplies.)



First and Last, 191cm x 219cm



The Carrier, 191cm x 209cm

Kam's Parfleche series unites the Native and the Christian, the now and the ancient, and the spiritual with the technical. (A parfleche is a leather hide used to wrap and carry belongings or supplies.)

Kam's Parfleche series unites the Native and the Christian, the now and the ancient, and the spiritual with the technical. (A parfleche is a leather hide used to wrap and carry belongings or supplies.)

ton by The Vanderleele Gallery. Robert Vanderleele, gallery director says, "We were most impressed with the maturity of Jeff's work. A powerful spirituality is expressed in his paintings through the successful combination of Native motifs with formalist concerns... We rarely offer representation to students fresh out of an MFA program. Jeff Kam is the rare exception."

Dr. Alfred Young Man, associate professor, Native American Studies

Department at the University of Lethbridge, said, "Jeff

Kahmakaotamo-Kam's exceptional paintings spring primarily from the very rich fountain-head of his Cree Indian heritage, but also, it is the extraordinarily strong art education which he acquired in some of the top fine art

schools in Canada and the U.S. (where he intensively studied Native American and Euro-American art) which acts to focus and deepen his exciting, original, intuitive and cognitive perceptions and ideas—which almost always emerge as visual and cultural metaphor in his work. His considerable philosophical talent and critical eye were evident from the very beginning and he should be regarded as nothing less than a standard bearer for the next generation of, not only Native American artists but, artists in general."

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